THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The Government is implementing Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project, which envisages cutting of a ship channel to connect the Gulf of Mannar and Bay of Bengal through Palk Bay and Palk Strait so that most of the ships, depending on draft required, moving between the east and the west coast of India, could have a continuous navigable sea route around the Peninsula within India's own territorial waters.

(c) The sanctioned cost of the project is Rs. 2427.40 crores.

Road from Jammu to Suchetgarh

1236. SHRI T.S. BAJWA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the proposal for the upgradation of the State Road from Jammu to Suchetgarh in Jammu and Kashmir has been submitted to this Ministry;

(b) if so, the steps that has been taken to upgrade this road;

(c) the amount released by Government for this purpose; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) Yes, Sir. A proposal for widening and upgradation of Satwari Airport R.S. Pura road including construction of 100 mtr. span two lane pre-stressed concrete bridge over Balol Nallah, which is the part of Jammu-Suchetgarh road, has been received only on 25th July, 2005 from State Government.

(b) The proposal has been approved by the Ministry.

(c) and (d) The expenditure can be incurred for this project also from the CRF funds released to State Government from time to time based on utilisation certificate received from the State Government.

Hi-Tech number plates

1237. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Central Government had proposed usage of hi-tech number plates for vehicles in view of large number of thefts and some of them being used for committing crimes;

(b) if so, whether all the States have been directed to implement usage of high-tech number plates for vehicles;

(c) if so, the details of States which have started implementing the proposal;

(d) the details of States which have opposed this move; and

(e) the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIAPPA): (a) Rule 50 of Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 has been amended to introduce high security registration plates. These plates have certain security features which would make removal, tampering or counterfeiting of such plates difficult. The objective underlying the introduction of high security registration plates is to enhance the security of vehicles thus minimising the menace of stolen vehicles being used in criminal activities.

(b) The responsibility to implement the provisions of Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and Rules made thereunder rests with the States. Hence separate direction to the States for implementation of the scheme is not necessary.

(c) As per information available, none of the States/U.Ts. having implemented the scheme, as on date.

(d) and (e) Some of the States had asked for postponement of the date of implementation of high security registration plates in respect of newly registered vehicles from 31st May, 2005. It has already been clarified to all the States/U.Ts that no change in the date of introduction of high security registration plates is envisaged.

Improvement along NH-5

1238. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Road Safety Forum had demanded certain improvements and changes along the NH-5 in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh;

(b) to what extent has the NHAI been responsive and prompt in matter of addressing such suggestions;

(c) whether it is also a fact that there is a delayed response to public demands by NHAI; and